

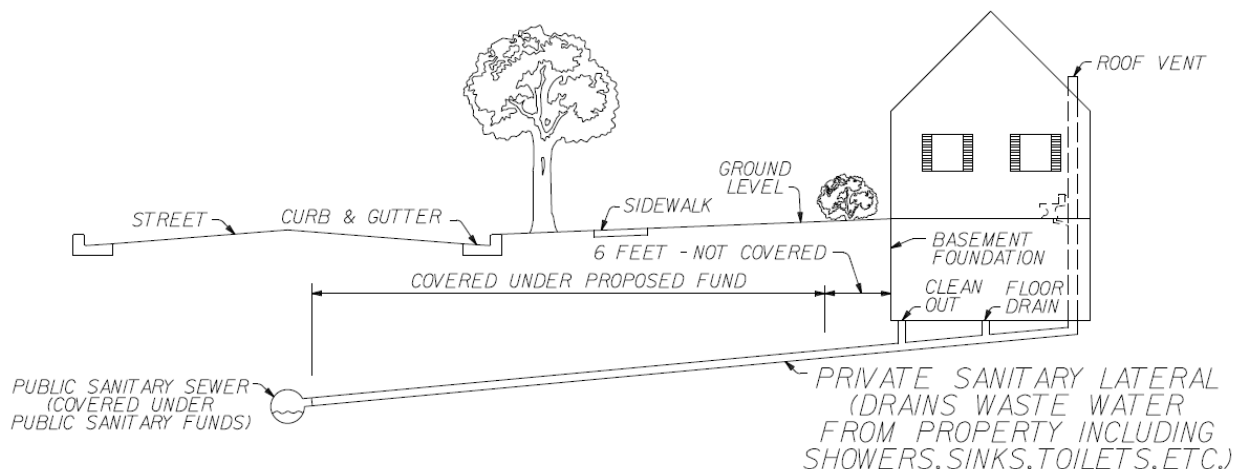
Residential Private Property Sanitary Inflow/Infiltration (I/I) Reduction Fund

Proposal By Department of Public Works, Engineering

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a sanitary sewer lateral and what does it do?

A sanitary sewer lateral is a pipe owned by the property owner that connects a building (home or commercial) to the sewer main. The sewer lateral is an essential part of the sanitary sewer system. It drains all waste water from your property (bathrooms, kitchens, showers, etc.) to the sanitary sewer main.



Who is responsible for maintenance of the sewer lateral?

The sanitary lateral is part of your property. Maintenance of the lateral is the responsibility of the property owner. Performing regular maintenance ensures the longevity of your lateral. With the proposed program, the property owner is still responsible for the cleaning, inspection and removal of roots or deposits which may result in reduced flow or blockage of the lateral.

What are the chances that my lateral will fail?

Many of the homes in the City of West Allis are older than 75 years. The average life of a sewer lateral is 75 to 100 years. Therefore, if nothing changed, we predict a significant increase in lateral failures over the next 25 years. While age is not the only cause of lateral failure, it is a consideration in predicting the chance of failure. The best way to determine the chance of failure of your lateral is to have it inspected.

What do I do if I am having a problem with my sewer lateral?

The first sign of a lateral problem is water ponding around or flowing out from the floor drain, which is usually located in the basement or in the laundry area of homes with no basement. The first step is to call Public Works (414-302-8800) to verify that the City main is not backing up. Then hire a plumbing or sewer cleaning contractor to investigate the problem. If the contractor believes that a structural failure exists, the City Engineer's office should be notified. If the City Engineer concurs that the problem is caused by a structural failure, arrangements will be made immediately to make the necessary repairs. If the problem is not an emergency, but does require rehabilitation, the work will be scheduled by the severity of the defects.

Most lateral problems are caused by blockages in the pipe and can be cleared by a plumbing or sewer cleaning contractor. If you have a blockage and it can be cleared by the contractor, it is a good idea to have your lateral inspected by the contractor. This inspection should be recorded on DVD or some other medium that can be shown to the City Engineer. The City Engineer can determine a priority for scheduling the rehabilitation of your lateral from the televised inspection.

Why does the City Engineer have to prioritize the rehabilitation or agree my sewer lateral has failed?

The Program fee is established to provide approximately 160 lateral rehabilitations per year and 25 emergency repairs. It is important that laterals to be rehabilitated are in need of rehabilitation and that failed laterals are actually failed. The number of failures and requests for rehabilitations will vary from year to year. It is possible that the cost to perform the number of rehabilitation requests and lateral failures would exceed the funding available for the year. To keep the cost of the program in check, it may be necessary to prioritize the rehabilitations. Laterals qualifying for rehabilitation are usually not on the brink of failure, so putting off the rehabilitation for a year or even longer should not be a concern for the owner.

Why is the fee needed?

This fee provides funding for work on private property to remove sources of clear water entering the sanitary system. Recent studies have shown that most clear water in the sanitary system (Inflow and Infiltration, I/I) is entering from private property sources. Removing I/I on private property is the most cost effective means to reduce clear water in the system, which reduces the risk of sewer back-ups and overflows into Lake Michigan during wet weather events.

This program also provides protection for the property owner. In the past, the property owner was responsible for any and all repairs to the sewer pipe that connects their home with the city sanitary sewer. If a failure were to occur, homeowners would be facing a repair bill averaging \$5,000 to \$15,000 or more, depending on the conditions. This proved to be a severe hardship to many homeowners. Because laterals are aging, failures and excessive leaking are becoming more common. This fee will help keep lateral repair and sewer flow reduction more affordable to property owners.

What is being changed and when does it take effect?

After the Public Hearing there will be time for comments on the program, then it will go to Common Council for their vote. If passed, the Fund will help pay for structural failures and rehabilitations on residential laterals. The Council will determine when the program will take effect if it passes.

If the program passes, in the event of a structural failure of a sanitary lateral, the repair will be paid for by this program and a Special Assessment of \$3,000 will be billed to the property owner. The Special Assessment can be paid over a ten year term. In addition, the City will have a proactive program for rehabilitating laterals, targeting areas of excessive wet weather sewer flows. This work may include sanitary lateral rehabilitation and foundation drain disconnection. This work will be paid for by the Fund and a Special Assessment of \$1,500 billed to the property owner. This Special Assessment can be paid over a ten year term as well.

What is my \$10 paying for?

First and foremost, the money goes toward the reduction in sanitary flows. This will reduce the risk for sewer back-ups and overflows, as well as reduce the future costs for having to convey and treat the additional flow. One of the direct benefits of this program to the property owner is that the program will pay toward the repair of failed sewer laterals and the rehabilitation of leaking sewer laterals, since they are a significant source of I/I. This means the property owner is not

longer at risk of an unexpected major repair cost due to the failure of the sewer lateral. Additionally, the City plans to proactively repair or replace leaky laterals. The proactive work will reduce the number of failed laterals. All money generated by this fee will be used for work on private property.

Why do I have to pay a Special Assessment for an emergency repair or a rehabilitation?

A special assessment is needed to keep the amount of the fee at an affordable level. This assessment can be paid over a 10 year period. Any work requiring a Special Assessment is voluntary.

My lateral is new. How do I benefit from this project?

By proactively managing sanitary sewer laterals we reduce the risk of sewer back-ups during wet weather events, which will help keep sewage out of your basement. We reduce the sewer charges from the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, which saves us all money. In addition, improved sanitary laterals will reduce leakage of sewage which can make its way into our creeks and rivers, which all drain to Lake Michigan. Cleaner water is a benefit everyone can enjoy. Having a newer lateral does not guarantee that you won't have a failure or major leak. The City televises the main sewers on a regular basis and we have seen defects in "new" sewer lines. It may take 100 years or more, but every lateral will eventually fail.

Will this fund be used for any other City expenses?

No. This fund will be used solely for work on residential private property sanitary systems for the purpose of reducing the clearwater entering the system.

If my lateral fails or has a blockage and the backup of sewage causes damages in my basement, will the City reimburse me for this clean-up?

No. The City will not take responsibility for clean-up from a failed or blocked lateral. Most homeowner's insurance policies have some sewer back-up coverage. Check with your insurance agent to find out if you are adequately covered.

Why are residential properties being charged a fee and commercial and manufacturing properties are not?

Non-residential properties have a variety of sanitary systems serving the property and some are quite extensive. A standard fee for such a variety of conditions would be difficult to establish. The City will be monitored for excessive flows from non-residential properties. If excessive flows are suspected, the non-residential property owner would be ordered to inspect and correct any problems with their sanitary lateral at their own cost.